

***VIVE LE PROPHET* – ANTI-SEMITISM FROM VOLTAIRE TO VICHY TO FRENCH MOLSEMS**

By Don Feder

Earlier this month, Jews were attacked at Auschwitz. Their assailants weren't Arabs, Germans, Poles or members of another group historically associated with anti-Semitism, but Frenchmen – the children of liberty, equality and *fraternity*.

The incident was part of a growing trend. Despite the protestations of President Jacques Chirac, European anti-Semitism has a French address.

The Jews – students from the U.S., Israel and Poland – were touring the museum at the death camp that's come to symbolize the horrors of the Holocaust. One of them, Tamar Schuri, had an Israeli flag wrapped around her shoulders.

On spotting the banner, the Frenchmen began swearing at the Jews and shouting anti-Semitic epithets. Maya Ober, a Polish Jew who lost family members at Auschwitz, said one Frenchman, "told us to go back to Israel and that we were stupid and should be ashamed to walk around with an Israeli flag." A Frenchman grabbed Tamar's arm. Observers said it would have come to blows, if the groups hadn't been separated.

It's unbelievable that Jews would be accosted for displaying the flag of the Jewish state at a place where 1.5 million Jews were murdered. It's revealing that their assailants were French.

Within days of the Auschwitz attack, a Jewish cemetery in Lyon was desecrated. Swastikas and anti-Semitic slogans were scrawled on tombstones. In France, even dead Jews can find no peace.

Two weeks later, a Paris-based Jewish soup kitchen was firebombed by a group calling itself the Jamaat Ansar Al-Jihad al-Islamiya. (Do you think they're Methodists?)

Chirac heroically pledged, "The perpetrators of this outrage are being actively pursued." He's probably assigned the bumbling Inspector Clouseau (of Pink Panther fame) to the case.

Since the autumn of 2000 (the start of the Palestinians' latest terrorism campaign against Israel) a wave of anti-Semitism has swept France -- Kristallnacht with Camembert.

Jewish cemeteries have been desecrated. Synagogues and day schools have been firebombed. Snipers have shot at buses carrying Jewish students. Rabbis have been assaulted. Jews wearing skullcaps have been beaten in the streets.

The number of anti-Semitic incidents in France increased from 320 in 2001 to 593 in 2003. In the first six months of this year alone, there were 510 hate crimes directed at French Jews. According to the Interior Ministry, in the same period, there were 135 physical attacks on Jews, compared to 127 in all of 2003. Anti-Semitic acts now account for over 80 percent of all bias-related offenses committed in France each year.

Rabbi Joseph Sitruk, France's chief rabbi, has asked Jews not to wear skullcaps in public. ("I ask young Jews to be alert, to avoid walking alone, to avoid wearing *yarmulkes* in the street or in the subway and consequently becoming targets for potential assailants.") The Simon Wiesenthal Center advises Jewish tourists to "exercise extreme caution" when traveling to the land of Vichy.

In the face of this Perrier pogrom, Ariel Sharon recently urged French Jews to emigrate to Israel. Chirac responded by telling the Israeli prime minister that he wasn't welcome in France. The old general – who's won more medals than the entire French army since the dawn of time – is thus deprived of the opportunity to study military strategy in the home of the Maginot Line.

Most of the attacks on Jews are the work of North African Moslems who've flooded the country. (Its Moslem population is estimated at six to eight million.) With 600,000 Jews (the third largest Jewish community in the Diaspora), France truly is a happy hunting ground for followers of the religion of peace. Since their homelands are largely *Judenrein*, it's a special treat for them to have real, live Jewish targets.

French indifference facilitates these crimes. The Moslems are the beneficiaries of centuries of French anti-Semitism.

The intellectual father of French Revolution, Voltaire, wrote of the Children of Abraham: "They are, *all of them*, born with raging fanaticism in their hearts, just as the Bretons and Germans are born with blond hair. I would not be in the least surprised if these people would not some day become deadly to the human race." This observation came at a time when European Jews cowered in ghettos.

Anticipating the Holocaust, 19th century French socialist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon had his own solution to the Jewish problem – "either sending back the Jews to Asia or exterminating them."

French anti-Semitism was the original impetus for Zionism. Theodor Herzl, an assimilated Austrian Jew, was so shocked when he encountered Parisian mobs shouting "Death to the Jews" during the Dreyfus Affair, that he was moved to write *Der Judenstaat* ("The Jewish State), starting a movement which would lead to the establishment of the State of Israel within 50 years.

The father of racist theory, Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882), was a Frenchman whose advocacy of Aryan supremacy influenced Hitler.

In all of occupied Europe, the Nazis found no more willing accomplices to the Final Solution than the French. The Vichy government rounded up 61,000 Jews and handed them over to the Nazis – almost all died at places like Auschwitz.

By contrast, the Italian army (allied with Germany) saved Jews in its zone of occupation in Southern France. The commander of these troops said it was “against the honor of the Italian army” to allow the deportation of Jews in territory it controlled. (The *honor* of the French army is illustrated by the scapegoating of Capt. Alfred Dreyfus.)

The post-war era saw little improvement in the attitude of the French government toward a people it’s never wanted and whose presence it deeply resents.

On November 28, 1967 (shortly after the Six Day War) then-President Charles DeGaulle told a press conference that the Jews are “an elite people, self confident, and domineering.” This from the leader of a nation universally celebrated for its humility.

DeGaulle (who hated Americans as well), also charged that the Jewish people were responsible for “provoking ill-will in certain countries at certain times.” Presumably, by breathing.

This animus cuts across the political spectrum. Francois Mitterrand, socialist president of France from 1981 to 1995, reportedly shared the sentiments of his predecessor regarding the Jews.

In 2001, Daniel Bernard, France’s ambassador to Britain, was overheard telling guests at a cocktail party that the world’s problems were all the fault of “that shitty little country, Israel.” Why, the ambassador wondered aloud, “should the world be in danger of World War III because of *those people*” (diplomatese for “the Jews.”). Ah, that Gallic charm.

For decades, a rabid anti-Zionism has infused French foreign policy. (Recall that France financed the building of Saddam Hussein’s nuclear reactor, destroyed by Israel in 1981.)

In the 1970s, France made a devil’s pact with the PLO. Arafat’s killers would be allowed to operate on la belle pays (and plan attacks on Jews from there) as long as they didn’t engage in terrorism on French soil. The French are adept at looking the other way, while others die.

It took Paris roughly three years of arson, assaults , sniper attacks and desecrations to finally admit that all was not well in its multicultural paradise. Initially, it simply denied reality.

In 2002, Chirac professed to be shocked and saddened that anyone would think there was anti-Semitism in France.

The President of the Republic assured us: “There is no upsurge in anti-Semitism in France ... nothing supports these statements” and that “France and all of its authorities remain very vigilant in this domain, and are extremely severe in punishing any of its manifestations, whatever they may be.”

Anti-Semites weren't deceived. In the Spring of 2003, Parisians protesting the US invasion of Iraq chanted, “Vive Chirac. Stop the Jews!”

In 2001, the president of the Representative Council of the Jewish Organizations of France wrote in *Le Monde*: “The leaders of the country like to play down anti-Semitic acts. They prefer to see these as ordinary violence. We are deluged with statistics designed to show that an attack against a synagogue is an act of violence and not anti-Semitism.”

I'm only surprised Chirac didn't also insist that there was no anti-Semitism in France during the Dreyfus Affair or in World War II. (It's just a coincidence that all 61,000 of its citizens sent to the gas chambers happened to be Jews.) The French have an expression: “The more things change, the more they remain the same.” In reality, there are few matters the French care about less than the fate of Jews – in France or anywhere else.

The center of European anti-Semitism is also a hotbed of anti-Americanism. Like the Jews, Americans are indicted for “arrogance.”

America is charged with the unpardonable offense of unilateralism. Pity that old warmonger Churchill acted unilaterally after France was overrun in 1940. And, just think, the British prime minister didn't even have a mandate from the League of Nations.

Like Americans, the Jews are resented for their success – which may be contrasted with the ennui and quiet failure of old Europe.

There is the feeling, almost universal among the French, that if the Jews and Americans were less assertive (i.e., rolled over and played dead), all of humanity's problems would go away.

Those Jews/Israelis, why can't they just give the Palestinians a state -- and give themselves suicide borders in the process -- the French ask?

Similarly, it is asserted that if America would just leave tyrants (and French trading partners) like Saddam Hussein alone, peace would reign supreme.

If we'd just turn everything over to the international debating society on the East River, instead of exercising our sovereign right of self-defense, France and the rest of nonaligned Europe could go quietly to the grave without having their three-hour lunches disturbed.

French hatred of Americans and Israelis is the rage of the impotent toward those with an intact survival instinct.

Speaking of a survival instinct, or lack thereof, if demographic trends continue, France will be a predominately Moslem nation in less than half a century. (*Vive le Prophet?*) The birthrate of its native population is 1.4 children per woman, well below replacement level. For French Moslems, it's double to triple that.

The French will end up where the world-weary usually end up: with the world grown weary of – and having discarded -- them. Frankly, it couldn't happen to nicer folks.

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